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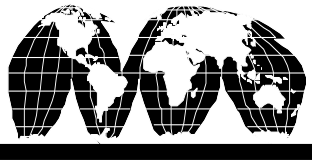
OECD/INES/NETWORK A

REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES



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In This Issue

The Autumn 2000 newsletter's main article discusses increasing involvement of developing countries in assessment and indicator activities. The article describes the increasing participation of countries around the world in large-scale international assessment activities, in their own national assessment activities, and in other regional or global initiatives that are focused on collecting educational data for the purpose of providing information to help evaluate and reform education systems. Importantly, it describes some of the special challenges to, as well as benefits of, participation for these developing countries, and it shares stories of how Network A members have been involved in providing technical assistance and mentoring to newcomers to the field of assessment.

Also included in this issue is a country highlight focusing on Korea, one of the newest Network A members. Read about the Korean education system and how national student assessments and examinations are conducted and used. As usual, the newsletter also provides updates on Networks A, B, and C, and the BPC, as well as a brief review of assessment activities occurring in member countries between January and June 2000.

We also thank all those who contributed to the newsletter. Special thanks are due to Drs. Do-Soon Park and Kooghyang Ro from the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation for authoring the article on the Korean education system, and to Allan Nordin of Sweden and Jaap Scheerens of the Netherlands and their respective staff for updates on Networks B and C. We appreciate your efforts in keeping us informed of activities from around the INES Project.

Assessments and Indicators of Education

Expansion to Developing Countries

Countries have long collected important information on students' access to education, their progression through school, completion rates, and the human and financial resources used in education. In the past thirty years, however, there has been an increasing trend to supplement basic education data with information on students' achievement in various subject areas, as results of assessments of student achievement can be useful for informing policy, establishing realistic standards, monitoring progress toward those standards, identifying factors for improving achievement, directing teacher's efforts to raise student achievement, promoting accountability, increasing public awareness, and informing political debate.

For the past several decades, many OECD countries have taken advantage of both international and national education assessments of student achievement. More recently, some developing countries have also been making substantial investments to participate in existing large-scale international assessments, to develop national assessment systems, and to establish new initiatives or networks to collect comparable data on their education systems.

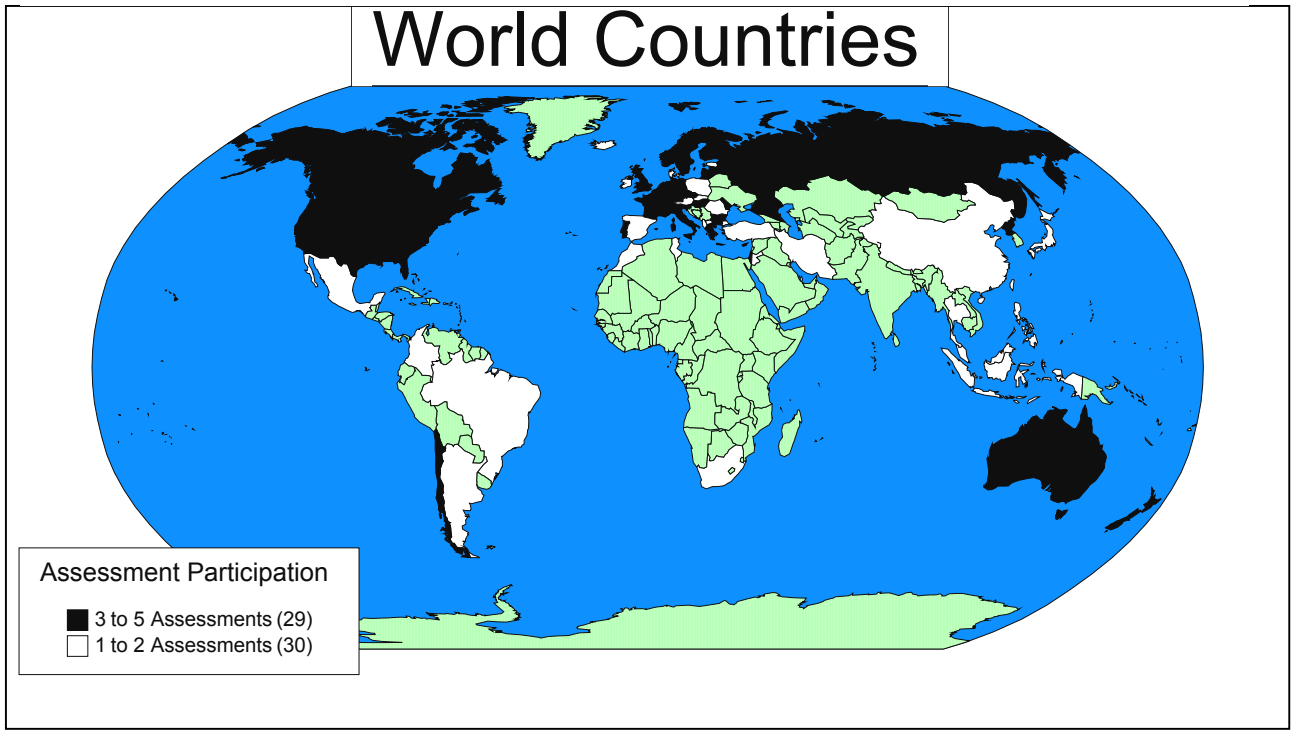
This article will profile the expanding and diversified participation in international and national assessment activities and other data-oriented regional activities. Special attention also is given to how Network A countries have been involved in collaborating with or mentoring newcomers to assessments.

International Assessments

During the 1990s, there was a dramatic increase in the number and range of countries participating in international assessments. Forty-five countries participated in the TIMSS assessment of eighth-grade students, twice as many as had ever participated in similar studies previously. Particularly remarkable was that countries from all over the world and from widely ranging levels of economic development participated in TIMSS.

It appears this expansion is continuing. With the support of the World Bank, many countries were able to participate in the repeat of TIMSS (TIMSS-R) in 1999, and many developing countries also are expressing serious interest or intent to participate in the new assessments that are being conducted in the next few years—OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) Study, IEA's Civic Education Study (CivEd), and IEA's Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Chart 1 shows the cross-section of countries involved in assessment activities across the globe and Table 1 shows which countries are participating in the various assessments currently in the field.[1]

Chart 1: Map of Countries Participating in International Assessments



[1] For some of these studies, participation has not been finalized. The countries listed have either indicated their commitment or at least expressed serious interest. Other countries may decide to participate as well.

Table 1: Participation in International Assessments

	TIMSS-R	CivEd	PISA	PIRLS	ALL
OECD Countries					
Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Austria			✓	✓	
Belgium	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Canada	✓		✓	✓	✓
Czech Republic	✓	✓	✓		✓
Denmark			✓		✓
Finland	✓	✓	✓		✓
France			✓	✓	✓
Germany		✓	✓	✓	
Greece		✓	✓	✓	
Hungary	✓		✓	✓	✓
Iceland			✓	✓	
Ireland			✓		
Italy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Japan	✓		✓		
Korea.	✓		✓		✓
Luxembourg			✓		✓
Mexico			✓		
Netherlands	✓		✓	✓	✓
New Zealand	✓		✓	✓	
Norway		✓	✓		✓
Poland		✓	✓		
Portugal		✓	✓		✓
Spain			✓		✓
Sweden			✓	✓	✓
Switzerland		✓	✓	✓	✓
Turkey	✓				
United Kingdom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
United States	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-OECD Countries					
Albania	✓		✓		
Argentina			✓		✓
Brazil			✓		
Bulgaria	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Chile	✓	✓	✓		✓
China			✓		✓
Taiwan	✓	✓			
Colombia		✓		✓	
Cyprus	✓	✓		✓	
Estonia		✓			
Hong Kong	✓	✓		✓	
Indonesia	✓				

	TIMSS-R	CivEd	PISA	PIRLS	ALL
Iran	✓			✓	
Israel	✓	✓	✓		
Jordan	✓			✓	
Latvia	✓	✓	✓		
Lithuania	✓	✓	✓		
Malaysia	✓				
Macedonia	✓			✓	
Moldova	✓		✓	✓	
Morocco	✓			✓	
Philippines	✓			✓	
Romania	✓	✓			
Russian Federation	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Singapore	✓			✓	
Slovakia	✓			✓	
Slovenia	✓	✓		✓	
South Africa	✓			✓	
Thailand	✓		✓		
Tunisia	✓				

For instance, in response to the increasing interest of non-member countries to take part in PISA, the OECD is launching a "second wave" of the first survey cycle, with the main data collection scheduled for 2001. Countries that have, so far, expressed their intention to participate in this extension of PISA include[2] Albania, Argentina, Bulgaria, Chile, Indonesia, Israel, Thailand, Lithuania, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

A variety of factors account for this expansion of international assessments—including the fact that comparative information gained from such assessments has become very important to policy makers in all countries. Article 4 of the World Declaration on Education for All, which was adopted by the World Conference on Education for All assembled in Jomiten, Thailand from 5-9 March, 1990, states that the focus of education must be "on actual learning acquisition and outcomes rather than exclusively upon enrollment, continued participation in organized programs and completion of certification requirements." Assessments of student achievement are essential for measuring the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, the belief that an economy's health would be determined by the capacity of its citizens to compete in a global environment underscored for many policy makers that assessments of education would have to include information that compared their students to those in other countries. Hence, international assessments received widespread support from a diversity of nations.

National Assessments

In addition to the increasing participation of non-OECD and developing countries in international assessment, some countries also are undertaking to develop national assessments. National assessments have the advantage of, obviously, being tailored specifically to the particular needs and conditions in a country. Brazil, Thailand, Egypt, Namibia, Colombia, and Jordan are but a few examples. This cross-section of nations

[2] Note that, by the time of publication of the newsletter, there may be additional countries that intend to participate that are not reflected, as the list is continually growing.

can offer insight and assistance to their neighbors, who may also be considering national assessment activities, in the development and design of such systems.

In particular, Jordan has developed what is considered to be a systematic and technically competent assessment program. Observers attribute the success of the program to: (1) the direct involvement of high-ranking government authorities and their commitment to improving education quality and open reporting of its progress; (2) the establishment of a well-funded independent organization responsible for assessment activities; and (3) strong technical leadership in collaboration with foreign experts. Jordan built upon its participation in the International Association for Educational Progress (IAEP)[3] and conducted several rounds of assessments in mathematics and science between 1989 and 1991 prior to establishing the national assessment program. Recent results reveal significant improvements in student learning as a result of their efforts to reform school curricula and teacher training using results from the earlier assessments.

The increased involvement of developing countries in national and international assessments is occurring at the same time as the expansion of secondary schools. Many goals for access to primary education are being increasingly achieved. The focus has now shifted to expanding secondary education to accommodate pupils who have been educated at the primary level. Emphasis on quality education is consistent with an interest in assessments. Concern for quality is also focusing attention on revising national curriculum and teacher training in order to support improved instruction and learning. The results from participating in assessments will help in this expansion and overhaul of their education systems.

[3] IAEP surveys attempted to link international studies to national assessment programs.

Regional and Global Initiatives for Gathering Educational Data

In addition to joining existing initiatives, many non-OECD and developing countries are establishing or joining networks—based on shared regional, cultural, or economic conditions—which are focused on developing systems for collecting valid, comparable educational data and, sometimes, on developing future assessments that will be useful in the specific context that participants share. For example, many Latin American countries have begun working together to develop a regional indicators system. Although at the initial stages of inquiry, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Arab Gulf Council, and the Organization of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education also have each shown interest in the field of assessment, initiating studies to compare their education systems and to promote increased capacity for research and evaluation. Three additional examples are enumerated below.

World Education Indicators (WEI)

Building on the OECD indicator program, eleven countries, under the auspices of UNESCO and OECD and with financial support of the World Bank, launched the WEI pilot program in 1997. The initial countries involved were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, and Thailand. A year later, Egypt, Morocco, Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe joined the program. This network of countries have contributed, with the assistance of the OECD and several OECD countries, to the development of educational indicators that are comparable to the data collected by OECD countries.

The WEI project was designed to collect a small but critical mass of policy-oriented education indicators that measure the current

state of education in an internationally valid, efficient and timely manner. The types of indicators collected include:

- Demographic, social and economic context of education;
- Costs of education, human and financial resources;
- Access to education, participation and progression;
- School environment and school/classroom processes; and
- Graduate output of educational institutions.

Many of the indicators selected are designed so that they can be constructed from existing national data sources. However, the collection process still is quite challenging for many participants, and not all countries have been able to collect all of the proposed indicators. Additionally, some adaptations to the indicator system have been necessary, and more adaptations may be forthcoming, as countries develop their capacities and clarify their particular data needs.

Central to the WEI project is national capacity-building, serving to familiarize the participating countries with the OECD methodology and to establish a network of expertise for future assessment work. Counties are required to actively contribute to conceptual and developmental work, implement data collection, provide quality control assistance, cooperate with the development of the indicators, and help in the preparation of the report. Although not an explicit part of the program, all but 6 of the WEI countries are participating in TIMSS-R, PISA, or PIRLS, which will allow them to develop indicators of student achievement as well.

Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ)

Another initiative—this one blending both descriptive data and assessment data—is the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). This Sub-Saharan Africa regional project focuses on the collection of baseline data in order to provide an assessment of the conditions of schooling in participating countries. It proposes to employ data analyses that are designed to determine the relative effects of educational input variables on achievement.

This study was launched in 1994 in conjunction with the International Institute for Educational Planning. Full member countries of SACMEQ are Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania mainland and Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The cooperative nature of the SACMEQ projects has allowed members to learn about the ways in which neighboring countries use research to tackle important areas of educational policy.

Policy questions SACMEQ addressed in its first assessment (which included an assessment of reading literacy) included:

- What is the baseline data for selected inputs to primary schools?
- How do the conditions of primary schooling compare with the country's Education Ministry's own data?
- Have educational inputs to primary schools been allocated in an equitable fashion among and within educational districts?
- What is the level of reading achievement for Grade 6 pupils?

- Which educational inputs to primary schools have the most impact upon reading achievement for Grade 6 pupils?

All members of the consortium thought these were appropriate and important questions, which allowed them to draw upon the results of other nations to learn about their own education systems. This project also contributed to the capacity-building of these nations in the technical skills of sampling, instrument design, data collection, data entry, data cleaning, data analysis, and report writing. It is recognized within SACMEQ that such skills are necessary for members to acquire so that they can continue a program of research and evaluation to monitor and shape the growth and performance of their education systems.

EFA 2000 Assessment

Between 1998 and 2000, the Education for All Forum launched the EFA 2000 Assessment Program, in which more than 180 countries participated, making it the most in-depth assessment of basic education ever undertaken. [It should be noted that the word assessment here is being used more generally than we usually use it in the newsletter. In this section, it is describing an evaluation of the conditions of education rather than an instrument or program designed to measure student achievement.] Headed by a national EFA coordinator, national teams prepared reports examining the progress towards achieving education for all, as well as revealing shortfalls and difficulties encountered in attaining the goal set in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. EFA 2000 differs from other activities discussed so far, as it is a compilation of national data sets rather than a coordinated systematic data collection. However, strong oversight and coordination with the ten regional technical advisory groups, assisted in ensuring a minimal level of comparability of data. Furthermore, the comprehensiveness of this activity mandated that we include it in the article.

The EFA 2000 Assessment includes 18 indicators, covering primarily demographic and social and financial contexts, such as enrollment rates, teacher qualifications and expenditures on primary education, and a few outcome indicators of education, such as literacy rates.

To supplement these indicators, the EFA 2000 Assessment also included a dozen thematic studies on educational issues of global concern and more than twenty country case studies on literacy and educational attainment of young people and adults. The thematic studies describe best educational practices, as well as successful and unsuccessful experiments in policy implementation. These case studies were carried out by interested countries under the sponsorship of donor agencies or NGOs.

Finally, surveys on learning achievement and the conditions of teaching and learning in primary schools were launched as part of the program in more than thirty developing countries, mostly in Africa. These surveys give precise information about the working conditions of teachers, the school environment and the quality of learning.

Network A Involvement

Many network A members have collaborated with countries outside the Network (as well as with each other) in a variety of assessment activities, both international and national.

Assistance to countries outside Network A sometimes occurs between countries sharing the same language, history, or culture who are participating in the same international study. For example, the **Czech Republic** regularly advises their *Slovak* colleagues on various issues related to IEA studies. The Czech Republic also participated in an IEA project that provided assistance to *Central and Eastern European countries* participating in

TIMSS between 1993 and 1997. The main focus of the project was to provide a series of training workshops designed to give researchers a background in the fundamentals of comparative assessment methodology, from instrument design and questionnaire construction to data analysis and report writing.

In another example, **Spain** has provided assistance to several other Spanish speaking countries. Spain provided technical assistance to *Peru* to define and construct a national system for an assessment of students' language achievement. *Bolivia* also received technical assistance from Spain on two primary education assessment projects over a five-year period. Finally, Spain held a seminar for *Paraguay* about the construction of instruments for the evaluation of the Paraguayan education system.

Several Network A countries also have worked with newcomers to the field of comparative education to help them develop their own capacity. **Ireland** has worked with Uganda and Zambia to assist them to develop and sustain national assessment systems. **Spain** provided technical assistance to *Bhutan* in building their "Assessment of Learning Processes and Outcomes" for the Bhutan Second Education Project. The **United States** is holding a seminar in collaboration with *China* entitled "New Directions in Student Testing and Technology in APEC Economies" to share information about assessments and discuss developments in all attendees economies. The **United States** also is sponsoring a meeting to bring together representatives of the *Chilean*-led project to develop regional education indicators for the Americas.

Many Network members also noted the importance of maintaining open channels of communication with their current colleagues. Of the responding countries, several indicated mutual collaboration in IEA and OECD studies. For example, **Belgium (Fr)** and **Australia** are collaborating on the data analysis of the first cycle of PISA. **Switzerland** indicated that mutual assistance with **Austria**, **Germany**, and **France** occurred during TIMSS implementation.

Network Updates

Network A

Network A last met in Wellington, New Zealand, in March 2000. Since that meeting, work over the summer has focused mainly on three areas. First, a team of experts led by John Dossey met several times to work on and continually revise a draft framework for the assessment of problem solving in PISA in 2003. Second, a working group of Network members met in July to discuss issues related to the analysis, presentation, and dissemination of outcomes indicators for current and future cycles of PISA. The group commissioned several preliminary analysis plans, which are intended as "thought pieces" for participating countries and the contractor as they begin to think about planning for analysis and questionnaire development for 2003. Third, the Secretariat also prepared two draft indicators based on TIMSS and TIMSS-R data for the next edition of *Education at a Glance, EAG 2001*: one on trends in student achievement in mathematics and science in the 8th grade and one on trends in the distribution of student achievement in mathematics and science in the 8th grade.

The Network's next meeting will be October 23-25, 2000, in Bremen, Germany. Topics on the agenda will include a review of draft indicators for *EAG 2001*, a review and final guidance on the draft framework for problem solving, a discussion on ways to inform the development of an analysis plan for PISA 2003, and a discussion on the future of the Network in light of the recent General Assembly meeting. Informational presentations will be given on the progress of

the EU assessment activity and on various initiatives for the assessment of information technology skills and other relevant assessment projects currently in the field.

Network B

Network B's last meeting was held in Paris on June 19–21, 2000. Two subgroup meetings were held in conjunction with the plenary meeting, at which nineteen countries were represented.

The first topic addressed was the status of data for *EAG 2001*. In examining what the Network had submitted to OECD for *EAG 2000,* a number of problems related to the links between national classifications and the new *ISCED 97* system were identified. Members noted that this would lead to problems for the presentation of indicators in 2001.

Other important topics included developmental and data issues related to work in Transition and in Continuing Education and Training.

Transition. After the plenary meeting a Workshop on Transition was held. It was arranged jointly by the European Network on Transition and the Network B sub-group on Transition. The major issue discussed at the meeting of the Transition subgroup was how to identify young people in work-study programs, and the main item of developmental work discussed was the indicator on early school-leavers.

The *Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life* proposed 14 indicators of the transition process. The subgroup believed it was important for Network B to be involved in the monitoring of transition systems and assessing the value of the proposed indicators and monitoring framework and therefore a working group was established.

The Transition subgroup believes the proposed longitudinal survey option for PISA 2003 represents an important opportunity to gain understanding of the transition process and that all countries should consider participation.

Continuing education and training (CET). Network B has recommended that OECD publish collected CET pilot data in EAG 2001. In the pilot data collection, a limited number of countries provided data on the participation in non-job-related CET, participation in informal training, and the volume of training that participants received. Members of the CET subgroup also will formulate some suggestions for OECD on CET indicators using IALS/SIALS data.

For some time, Network B has been discussing the development of a module on CET. The module is intended to be a set of recommendations that can be used in implementing surveys on participation in continuing education and training in order to enhance comparability across surveys.

Other work. Network B also undertakes developmental work on Rates of Return to Education, which has led to some interesting proposals for future indicators. The United States will coordinate the continuation of this work, and Sweden will be responsible for data collection.

The next Network B meeting will take place in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, at the end of January 2001. Among other items on the agenda will be conclusions from the General Assembly and the set-up of the next data collection.

Network C

Network C met twice during the first half of 2000—once in Budapest on January 24-26 and again in Washington, D.C. on May 24-26. At these meetings, members focused on:

- the results of the first phase of the Survey of Schools at the Upper Secondary Level;
- the definition of the target population and the unit of sampling for the second phase of the Survey of Schools at the Upper Secondary Level;
- the organization and implementation of the second phase of the Survey of Schools at the Upper Secondary Level;
- the preparation of chapters for the INES Compendium for the General Assembly in September 2000; and
- the preparation of indicators for EAG 2001.

The primary aim of the Network's Survey of Schools at the Upper Secondary Level is to yield indicators regarding the learning environment and the organization of schools at the upper secondary level in the 20 participating countries.

The Survey is split into two phases: Phase 1, including the Classification Study and the design of the Survey instrument, and Phase 2, including the design of a sampling plan, the translation of questionnaires, the implementation of the pilot test and main survey and data cleaning and analysis.

In the Classification Study, the systems of upper secondary education for each of the participating countries were described and a classification framework was developed. Additionally, a draft survey instrument was developed and pre-tested in four countries.

The results of both the Classification study and the pre-test were discussed at the Network's May meeting. It also was at this time that members agreed upon a procedure to define the target population and sampling unit.

July 2000 marks the implementation of the second phase of the Survey of Schools at the Upper Secondary Level. Important deadlines during the second phase will be:

- December 2000: Completion of the pre-pilot study,
- March 2001: Completion of the pilot study,
- March - June 2001: Main data collection, and
- October 2001: Preparation of the draft study report.

For the INES Compendium for the 2000 General Assembly, Network C prepared a section entitled *The learning environment and its relationship to outcomes*, which includes four chapters:

- Measuring functional decentralization,
- Indicators on teachers and the conditions of teaching,
- Measuring process indicators on school functioning by means of surveys, and
- School-to-work transition.

As in previous years, Network C will produce indicators on statutory salaries of teachers, intended instruction time, and teaching/working time for *EAG 2001*. In addition, an initial attempt has been made to develop indicators on how schools evaluate their performance.

The next Network C meeting will be in Mainz, Germany, from November 29 to December 1, 2000.

BPC Update

The BPC last met in March 2000 in Australia, where members discussed various activities related to the completion of the main study, as well as the release of the Terms of Reference for the second cycle of PISA. Over the summer, a team of experts evaluated the bid from the first cycle consortium led by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), and OECD worked with the BPC's Executive Group to finalize the contract.

The BPC will next meet on October 26-27, 2000, in Bremen, Germany, in conjunction with the Network A meeting. Members have an extremely full agenda, including reviews of the analysis plan for 2000, the problem solving framework, the 2001 budget, and discussions on the plans for the implementation for the second cycle and technical standard for first cycle reports.

Country Highlight: Republic of Korea

This article was prepared by Drs. Do-Soon Park and Kooghyang Ro from The Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE).

This article presents an overview of the education system and student assessments in Korea. Education reform is a high national priority in Korea, covering virtually every corner of the education system. However, much of the reform centers on the way students are assessed in school or in the national examinations.

Republic of Korea's Education System

The school structure in Korea is made of three levels: six years of primary school (ages 6-11), three years of middle school (ages 12-14), and three years of high school (ages 15-17). Primary education is free and compulsory. Middle school education is compulsory with the government providing financial assistance for students who live in rural areas. There are two options for middle school graduates advancing to high school—general academic schools and vocational schools. General academic high schools include some special-purpose high schools for students who are gifted in the sciences, arts, or foreign languages. Korea's higher education institutes include two- or three-year junior/technical colleges and four-year universities.

The education administration consists of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Offices of Education at the provincial and county levels. MOE is the central authority and is responsible for planning and implementing policy and for supervising and supporting the Offices of Education. The Offices of Education are located in seven metropolitan cities and nine administrative provinces. Each Office has subordinate offices of education in counties and equivalent administrative areas. In the early 1990s, educational administration became decentralized with the enactment of the local autonomy law. With this law, MOE delegated much of its budget planning and major administrative decisions to local educational authorities.

MOE retains responsibility for developing the national curriculum, which is one of the most important mechanisms through which the government controls the quality of education in Korea. The national curriculum has been revised seven times over the years to reflect changes in society and educational practices. The 7th revised curriculum, which became effective in 2000, granted significant autonomy to schools to implement flexible curricula to meet individual needs of students. This curriculum introduces a common basic curriculum for grades 1 to 10 and an elective curriculum for grades 11 and 12. The common basic curriculum is designed to provide a general academic foundation and to establish a coherent and consistent link between the primary and secondary education levels. The elective curriculum allows high school students to select courses according to their interests, abilities, and career goals.

Student Assessment and Testing in Republic of Korea

Student assessments and testing in Korea are characterized by several major activities—the

National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA), participation in international activities, the School Activities Records, and the College Scholastic Achievement Test (CSAT).

NAEA is a national assessment to monitor educational achievement in Korea. The Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), a government-funded research institute, is responsible for the assessment. NAEA is administered to a sample of students in grades 6, 9, and 11 in order to:

- gather data on the educational progress of students, which will provide feedback to educational policy-making and improvements in curriculum and instruction; and
- disseminate innovative and exemplary assessment items, which will facilitate improvement in student assessment in schools.

To complement national assessment activities, Korea has been participating in various international assessment projects, including TIMSS, TIMSS-R and PISA. Like other countries, Korea shares an interest in setting a global context for the nation's student achievement. By participating in international student assessment projects, Korea hopes to gauge the level of student achievement against the standards set by students around the world, to stay abreast of innovative technologies in student assessment, and to use assessment results to inform and foster research and development in curriculum and instruction.

While NAEA and international activities focus on the achievement of students as a whole, the other two activities mentioned assess the performance of individual students. The School Activities Records were introduced as part of education reform measures in 1995. The purpose of the Records is to establish a system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation of students by their teachers. The Records compile information on student progress in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, as well as on special talents and extra-curricular activities. Since the Records document student performance and progress throughout primary and secondary education, the Records can serve multiple uses. Teachers use the Records to better understand and guide students, and high schools and universities use students' Records in the application review process.

The College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) is the national college entrance examination in Korea. The CSAT is an advanced test that measures high school graduates' academic aptitude and integrated knowledge and skills across various subjects. MOE commissioned KICE to develop and manage the CSAT. Since the CSAT provides scores that indicate the national standings of individual students, the test plays the most critical role in college admissions compared to other evaluation criteria. Consequently, students prepare intensively for the test, and classroom instruction in the higher grades tends to focus on the content and skills that are covered by the CSAT. Intense competition for college admission takes precedence over building sound character in school education, and private tutoring to prepare for the entrance examination can drain parental resources. The current college entrance system, which relies heavily on students' CSAT scores and grade point averages (GPAs), is criticized for putting too much emphasis on academic achievements.

MOE has recently proposed a new college entrance system that will become effective in 2002. Under the new college entrance system, universities will be allowed to develop their own criteria to select students. CSAT scores may be used as minimum requirement that each applicant should meet. Universities can then apply diverse and unique criteria so that they can admit applicants who might not have earned high scores on the standardized tests or

who have low GPAs, but who have special talents or backgrounds that can be further developed in the university. It is hoped that the new college entrance system will have a positive effect on higher education, as well as on secondary education.

Current Assessment Activitites

During the past six months, countries have been busy with a variety of assessment activities. At the international level, many countries were engaged in activities related to the main data collection for PISA 2000. For those countries involved in PIRLS, activities such as test construction and consensus-building for the field trial were occurring. In **New Zealand** in particular, officials are excited to be preparing a Maori language version of the test, which will be administered in the main study. Also, many countries noted that they are busy reviewing their results from TIMSS-R and preparing national reports.

In addition to activities at the international level, several responding countries also described activities related to national assessment or examination programs:

- In **Belgium (French Community)** , officials were busy preparing for their annual national assessment, which takes place in October. This year, the survey will assess the reading and writing skills of pupils in the 11th grade (generally, 16 year olds) who are on an academic track.
- In the **Czech Republic**, publication of the requirements for the new secondary school leaving exam met with controversy, causing officials to postpone the commencement of the examination program.
- **Ireland** published a report (Millar, D. and Kelly, D., 2000) examining the linkages between two state exams, the Junior Certificate (taken by students at the end of 9th grade) and the Leaving Certificate (taken by pupils at the end of 12th grade).
- **Spain** was involved in a several activities at the national level. Currently, officials are defining and constructing an evaluation system for the English assessment for secondary education students, and pilot testing is expected in September or October. Scoring and analysis are underway or completed for three national assessments: *Survey of the Directive Function in the Primary and Secondary Education*, *Evaluation of Primary Education*, and *Evaluation of Secondary Education.* Results have been published for the *Evaluation of Primary Education* and *Evaluation of Secondary Education.* Also, the first edition of the *Spanish National System of Educational Indicators* has been published.
- In **Sweden**, data collection results from national tests of year 9 and upper secondary school students in mathematics, Swedish and English have been released. Test development is currently underway for next year's examination.

This newsletter is published under the auspices of Network A. Network A, which is primarily concerned with indicators of student achievement is one of four working groups that are part of OECD's international Indicators of Education Systems (INES) Project. The newsletter is prepared by Eugene Owen (Network A Chair) and Jay Moskowitz, Maria Stephens, Cassandra Jessee, and Yasmin Shaffi of the American Institutes for Research with contributions from Network A members.

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